



February 22, 2005

The Honorable Michael Castle
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
1530 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Castle and DeGette:

The National Venture Capital Association (NVCA) strongly supports your legislation, HR 810, The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, expanding federal support for human stem cell research. The NVCA represents over 450 venture capital firms, many of which play a large role in fueling health care innovation in the country. In fact, a recent study commissioned by NVCA found that 1 out of every 3 Americans has been positively affected by venture backed medical innovations developed over the past 20 years. Looking forward, we see venture capital playing the same critical role in bringing the promise of stem cell research to patients in the form of life saving cures.

More than three years have passed since President Bush articulated the current federal policy in this area in a nationally televised statement in August 2001. Since then, we have learned much more about the potential of research on human stem cells to open vistas of scientific research for future therapies and cures that could save millions of lives at risk today from diseases and medical conditions including Alzheimer's disease, cancer, juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's disease, traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries. We have also learned that the limitations placed by the existing federal policy are consigning U.S. medical research to the sidelines even as other nations are hurrying to develop this field. As you know, American scientists report that it is increasingly difficult to not only attract new scientists but also to retain current scientists to stem cell research out of concern that federal restrictions will keep this crucial research from being successful.

Your legislation would allow broader federal funding for stem cell research, while ensuring no federal funding shall be used to derive stem cells or destroy embryos. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act also would direct the National Institutes of Health to develop appropriate ethical guidelines for future derivation of human stem cell lines.

Our members salute your leadership. We thank you for your dedicated efforts to preserve the promise of medical research for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M. Heesen", is written over a horizontal line.

Mark G. Heesen
President
National Venture Capital Association